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Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims by replacing all prior versions of the claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.121 with the following listing of claims:

What is claimed is:

1. (currently amended) A method for the treatment of a lignin-containing material comprising contacting the lignin-containing material with an ionic liquid to extract the lignin into the ionic liquid.
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the lignin from the lignin-containing material extracted into the ionic liquid is recovered from the ionic liquid.
3. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein solids remaining after the lignin has been extracted into the ionic liquid are separated from the ionic liquid.
4. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with a single species of ionic liquid.
5. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with a mixture of different ionic liquid species.
6. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with a combination of the ionic liquid and a cosolvent.
7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with a combination of the ionic liquid and water.

8. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with a solvent composition comprising between 50 and 100% of the ionic liquid.
9. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1, wherein the ~~lignin-containing material is contacted with~~ ionic liquid ~~which~~ comprises:
 - ~~an~~ a substituted or unsubstituted aryl organic acid anion; and
 - an ionic liquid-forming inorganic cation or an organic cation.
10. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein the anion component of the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl, naphthyl or pyridyl organic acid anion.
11. (currently amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the aryl organic acid anion is substituted ~~by between 1 and 4~~ with 1 to 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of alkyl, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, halogeno, hydroxy, nitro, haloaryl and sulfonate.
12. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 9 to 11~~ claim 9, wherein the organic acid anion is a sulfonate, sulfate, ~~carboxylates~~ carboxylate, phosphinate or a phosphate.
13. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 9 to 12~~ claim 9, wherein the organic acid anion is a sulfonate.
14. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 9 to 13~~ claim 9, wherein the anion is a substituted or unsubstituted aryl disulfonate anion.
15. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 9 to 14~~ claim 9, wherein the cation of the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolium, triazolium, pyrazolium, pyridinium, pyrrolidinium, piperidinium, phosphonium equivalents of one of the preceding groups, an ammonium, phosphonium or sulfonium cation.

16. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein the cation is substituted by one or more selected from the group consisting of aliphatic, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, hydroxy, nitro and haloaryl.
17. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, wherein the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolium, triazolium, pyrazolium, pyridinium, pyrrolidinium, piperidinium, ammonium, phosphonium or sulfonium salt of a substituted or unsubstituted aryl sulfonate.
18. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with a kraft alkali liquor in the presence ~~with~~ of an ionic liquid additive.
19. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 18~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is a ligno-cellulosic material.
20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the lignin is selectively extracted into the ionic liquid, without significant degradation of the cellulose and hemicellulose of the ligno-cellulosic material.
21. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 18~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material ~~is~~ comprises a plant or plant derivative material.
22. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 21~~ claim 1, wherein the lignin-containing material is selected from one or more of lignocellulosic residues of sugar, wheat, rice and corn or other biomass, agricultural grasses, woodchips, bamboo, as well as any materials proximately or ultimately derived from plants.
23. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 22~~ claim 1, comprising contacting the lignin-containing material with the ionic liquid to extract the lignin and

optionally other chemicals into the liquid phase, and separating the liquid phase from remaining solids.

24. (currently amended) The method of claim 23, wherein the lignin-containing material is a lignocellulosic material, and the remaining solids comprise cellulosic fibre.
25. (currently amended) The method of claim 23 ~~or claim 24~~, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with the ionic liquid at an elevated temperature.
26. (currently amended) The method of claim 25, wherein the ~~temperatures~~ elevated temperature is between 50 and 200°C.
27. (original) The method of claim 26, wherein the lignin-containing material is contacted with the ionic liquid at atmospheric pressure.
28. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 23 to 27~~ claim 23, wherein the time of contact is between 1 and 8 hours.
29. (currently amended) The method of any one of claims 23 ~~to 28~~ claim 23, further comprising ~~precipitation of~~ precipitating the lignin from the liquid phase after separation of the liquid phase from the remaining solids.
30. (currently amended) The method of claim 29, further comprising recovering the precipitated lignin from the liquid phase.
31. (currently amended) The method of claim 30, further comprising dewatering the diluted stream of ionic liquid, from which the precipitated lignin has been removed, to remove excess water therefrom.
32. (currently amended) The method of claim 31, further comprising distilling the dewatered ionic liquid to remove other chemicals extracted from the lignin-containing materials therefrom.

33. (currently amended) The method of claim 32, further comprising recycling the ionic liquid recovered following distillation for contacting with further lignin-containing material.
34. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The product produced by the method of any one of claims 1 to 33 claim 1.
35. (currently amended) ~~Use of~~ A method of using an ionic liquid in the treatment of a lignocellulosic material to extract lignin into the ionic liquid and preserve the cellulosic fibre comprising the step of contacting the ionic liquid with the lignocellulosic material.
36. (currently amended) ~~Use~~ The method of claim 35, wherein the ionic liquid comprises:
- an substituted or unsubstituted aryl organic acid anion; and
- an ionic liquid-forming inorganic cation or an organic cation.
37. (currently amended) ~~Use~~ The method of claim 36, wherein the anion component of the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl, naphthyl or pyridyl organic acid anion.
38. (currently amended) ~~Use~~ The method of claim 36, wherein the aryl is substituted by between 1 and 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of alkyl, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, halogeno, hydroxy, nitro, haloaryl and sulfonate.
39. (currently amended) ~~Use of any one of claims 35 to 38~~ The method of claim 35, wherein the organic acid anion is a sulfonate, sulfate, carboxylates, phosphinate or a phosphate.
40. (currently amended) ~~Use of any one of claims 35 to 39~~ The method of claim 35, wherein the organic acid anion is a sulfonate.
41. (currently amended) ~~Use of any one of claims 35 to 40~~ The method of claim 35, wherein the anion is a substituted or unsubstituted aryl disulfonate anion.

42. (currently amended) ~~Use of any one of claims 35 to 41~~ The method of claim 35, wherein the cation of the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolium, triazolium, pyrazolium, pyridinium, pyrrolidinium, piperidinium, phosphonium equivalents of one of the preceding groups, an ammonium, phosphonium or sulfonium cation.
43. (currently amended) ~~Use~~ The method of claim 42, wherein the cation is substituted by one or more selected from the group consisting of aliphatic, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, hydroxy, nitro and haloaryl.
44. (currently amended) ~~Use~~ The method of claim 43, wherein the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolium, triazolium, pyrazolium, pyridinium, pyrrolidinium, piperidinium, ammonium, phosphonium or sulfonium salt of a substituted or unsubstituted aryl sulfonate.
45. (original) An ionic liquid comprising
- an substituted or unsubstituted aryl organic acid anion; and
 - an ionic liquid-forming inorganic cation or an organic cation.
46. (original) The ionic liquid of claim 45, wherein the anion component of the ionic liquid is a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl, naphthyl or pyridyl organic acid anion.
47. (original) The ionic liquid of claim 45, wherein the aryl is substituted by between 1 and 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of alkyl, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, halogeno, hydroxy, nitro, haloaryl and sulfonate.
48. (currently amended) The ionic liquid of ~~any one of claims 45 to 47~~ claim 45, wherein the organic acid anion is a sulfonate, sulfate, carboxylates, phosphinate or a phosphate.
49. (currently amended) The ionic liquid of ~~any one of claims 45 to 48~~ claim 45, wherein the organic acid anion is a sulfonate.

50. (currently amended) The ionic liquid of ~~any one of claims 45 to 49~~ claim 45, wherein the anion is a substituted or unsubstituted aryl disulfonate anion.
51. (currently amended) The ionic liquid of ~~any one of claims 45 to 50~~ claim 45, wherein the cation is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolium, triazolium, pyrazolium, pyridinium, pyrrolidinium, piperidinium, phosphonium equivalents of one of the preceding groups, an ammonium, phosphonium or sulfonium cation.
52. (original) The ionic liquid of claim 51, wherein the cation is substituted by one or more selected from the group consisting of aliphatic, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, hydroxy, nitro and haloaryl.
53. (original) An ionic liquid comprising a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolium, triazolium, pyrazolium, pyridinium, pyrrolidinium, piperidinium, ammonium, phosphonium or sulfonium salt of a substituted or unsubstituted aryl sulfonate.
54. (original) The ionic liquid of claim 53, wherein the substituted or unsubstituted aryl sulfonate is a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl, naphthyl or pyridyl sulfonate.
55. (currently amended) The ionic liquid of claim 53 ~~or claim 54~~, wherein the substituents of the aryl sulfonate component are selected from the group consisting of aliphatic, alicyclyl, aryl, aralkyl, alkylaryl, heteroaryl, hydroxy, nitro and haloaryl.
56. (currently amended) ~~Use of~~ A method of using the ionic liquid of ~~any one of claims 45 to 55~~ claim 45 in the treatment of a natural material, comprising the step of contacting the ionic liquid with the natural material.
57. (currently amended) ~~Use~~ The method of claim 56, wherein the natural material ~~is a~~ comprises plant materials and plant-derived materials.